

CLAIMS

1. A method for facilitating electronic commerce, the method comprising the steps of:

(a) at a first time, receiving from a mobile consumer at a first location a request to identify a merchant of a specified type within a specified distance from the mobile consumer;

(b) defining a boundary substantially centered about the first location and radially extending the specified distance from the first location in surrounding directions so as to encompass the mobile consumer; and

(c) identifying for the mobile consumer a merchant of the specified type within the defined boundary.

2. The method of claim 1, further comprising the steps of:

(d) at a subsequent time, identifying a next location of the mobile consumer; and

(e) in response to the next location differing from the first location, repeating steps (b) and (c) using the next location to define the boundary.

3. The method of claim 2 further comprising the step of periodically repeating steps (d) and (e).

4. The method of claim 1, further comprising the steps of, in response to there being no merchant of the specified type within the defined boundary:

increasing the specified distance by a predefined increment;

defining an expanded boundary using the increased distance; and

identifying for the mobile consumer a merchant of the specified type within the expanded boundary.

5. The method of claim 1 wherein said surrounding directions are defined in two dimensions.

6. The method of claim 1 wherein said surrounding directions are defined in three dimensions.

7. The method of claim 1 wherein the specified distance is measured in units of length.

8. The method of claim 7 wherein the units of length are miles.

9. The method of claim 1 wherein the specified distance is measured in units of city blocks.